41 77

A

Word of Counsel,

IN THE

Love of God,

To the Persecuting

Magistrates & Clergy,

For them to Read and Consider.

But chiefly to those of the City and County of Glouceſter, *that have been active to carry on that unchriſtian work of* Perſecution, *againſt their honeſt Neighbours, for the exerciſe of their tender Conſciences towards God in matters of Religion, by whom many have been great Sufferers.*

OH that you would be Warned, and take Counſel in time, whom God hath ſpared alive to ſee this Day, wherein *Liberty of Conſcience* is granted to all to Worſhip God as they are preſwaded in their own Minds; and now conſider, I entreat you, and repent and return to the Lord, and humble your ſelves before the moſt high God, that he may paſs by your Tranſgreſſions, and blot out your Sins, and ſhew Mercy unto your Souls before you come to a Dying-Bed; and for time to come do

 Juſtly,

Juſtly, love Mercy, hate Oppreſſion, and walk humbly before the Lord, and with us prize the Mercy of the Lord, who has put a ſtop to your Heats and Paſſions, and inclined the *King* to grant free *Liberty of Conſcience* to all, and hath declared, *That Conſcience ought not to be forced in matters of meer Religion*, and this none that live in the Doctrine of Chriſt (which is, *to do as they would be done by*) can be againſt; therefore it is good for all to prize this Mercy, and to receive it from the Hand of the Lord with thankful Hearts, and pray unto the Lord to continue this Favour unto us unto the end.

And although you have in time of Perſecution drove on the Work very furiouſly againſt us, with a deſign to Ruin us (as ſome have been heard to ſay) becauſe we could not Conform, and come to your Church, and at that time you would not hearken to Counſel when it was given you, yet the Lord hath put it into my Heart once more to warn you, to mind the things that belongs to your Peace, before they are hid from your Eyes; for there is yet a Door of Mercy open for you, if you Repent with ſpeed, and meet the Lord by amendment of Life, before the Door of Mercy be ſhut againſt you; therefore ſhut not your Ear againſt the Counſel of the Lord; for I can truly ſay, that I ſeek the Peace and Welfare of your Souls, and that you ſhould conſider and lay it to Heart, how you went on without Gods Fear, as thô you did not conſider that you were but Mortal Men, and that the Immortal God did ſee your Cruelty and Hard-heartedneſs againſt his People, how you made a Prey upon the Widdow and Fatherleſs, and pulled the Sheaf from the Hungry, and the Fatherleſs from the Breaſt; ſuch are they that rebel againſt the Light, *Job* 24. *Chap.* and ſuch was your Fury, that you regarded neither Age nor Sex; but now you have an opportunity to look back and take a view of your evil Works, and ceaſe to do Evil, and learn to do Well, that you may find Favour with God, which is that I deſire to ſee, althô I have been a great Suffer by you, who denied me Juſtice; but I with many more cryed unto the Lord in the time of Tribulation, whoſe Ear was open unto our Cry, and he found a way, which was unexpected for our deliverence, praiſe forever to his worthy Name.

And this day of Liberty, if you prize it, may prove a great Bleſſing to you, which prevents you from acting more Cruelty againſt

(78

againſt the Lords People. I write not this to upbraid you, but in Love to warn you, *to do as you would be done by*

You Magiſtrates of the City and County of *Glouceſter*, who have been active in this unchriſtian work of Perſecution againſt an Innocent People, if this ſhould come to your Hands, I entreat you to read it with Moderation, and take Counſel in time, for as I have ſometime ſaid to ſome of you, Good Counſel will not hurt you, or any Man. Oh, that I may prevail with you to take Counſel of the Lord, and obey the Light of his Son Chriſt Jeſus in your own Hearts, that will teach you to do as you would be done by, and not to continue in ſuch an unchriſtian frame of Mind, ſtill to Oppreſs the Poor. I was grieved to hear that you keep the Poor Man *William Bowley* out of his Money, and denied him a Tryal at the laſt Seſſions, gave Vote againſt him in the Court at *Cirenceſter*, the 8th Month 1687. he was fined Twenty Pound for Preaching, when he did not Preach; and he was a great Sufferer before, as you know, and as ſeveral that were there will teſtifie upon Oath, if called thereunto

Oh! how induſtrious have you been all along to drive on this unchriſtian Work; for a poor Widdow that had got a little Corn to make her Bread, *viz. Sarah Simons*, which ſhe had gleaned in the Harveſt; and another poor Widdow that had bought half a *Bacon Pig*, to feed her Fatherleſs Children, and your ſcurvy Order frighted Men, ſo that they took it all away, and you threatned to Ruin us all, and did your endeavour to effect it, and bring it to paſs, and think you the Lord will not viſit for theſe things; but what ſaith the Prophet *Iſaiah*, *Wo unto them that decree unrighteous Decrees, and that write Grievouſneſs, which they have preſcribed to turn away the Needy from Judgment, and to take away the Right from the Poor of my People, that Widdows may be their prey, and that they may rob the Fatherleſs.* Conſider this I entreat you, now you have time, whether you have not purchaſed this Wo to your ſelves by your Orders and Decrees, that you have made againſt the Lords People—— Read your Portion *Iſa.* 17. 14. *And behold at Evening tide Trouble, and before the Morning he is not; this is the Portion of them that Spoyl us, and the Lot of them that Rob us.*

Many of our Perſecutors hath the Lord removed by Death, ſince Perſecution firſt began in this Town, and them that have

been active and furious against us within these Thirty Years last past, hath the Lord taken away, so that there is not one of them left, till this last Storm, and Three of them hath been taken away also; this one would think would make others fear to go on in the same Work. Give me leave to make mention a little of your Dealings towards me, how in the Year 1682. by Warrant Signed by Sr *Thomas Cuttler* and *James George*, to the High Constable of *Cirencester*, I was taken up in the Street, and carryed before the said *James George*, and sent to *Glouceſter Caſtle*, whom I told when I was before him, The Lord would plead my Cause with him, and the same measure he meeted would be measured to him from the hand of the Lord; and so it came to pass, for before I was discharged, the Lord took his Wife from him, who had taken me from my Husband, and the said *James George*, after I was discharged, came to our peaceable Meeting with several Officers, and the Bishop of *Glouceſter* with him; and when they came in, I was making Supplication to the Lord; and the Bishop said, *Is this the Woman you were ſpeaking of*, he said *Yes my Lord*, then he laid his hands upon me, and shoock me, and pulled me by the Arm so hard, that he had almost pulled me backward, saying, *Woman you ſhould give over, and obey the Kings Officers.* But I chose rather to obey God then Man, and the Lord was with us, blessed be his name, and his Power was over all, and he did preserve me out of the fear of Man at that time. And the Bishop said to the Justice, *Take their Names*; but I took no notice of him, but continued until I had eased my Spirit before the Lord, who is worthy of all Praise and Glory for his Goodness to his Poor Dispised People. The Justice set fines upon Friends, and Twenty Pounds upon *Richard Bowley* for Praying in the said Meeting. Thus People may see how the Magistrates and Clergy joyn together to Persecute us, and by these fruits People may see that he is not a true Christian Bishop (not like Christ the Shepherd and Bishop of the Soul) as the Apostle speaks of in *Timothy and Titus*: who said, *A Biſhop ſhould be Blameleſs, not ſoon Angry, of good behaviour, given to Hoſpitality, apt to Teach, no Striker, but Patient, not a Brawler, but a lover of good Men, Sober, Juſt, Holy, Temperate*, whether this Bishop was so qualified, I shall leave the Understanding Reader to judge.

And

And in the Tenth Month 1682. *James George* sent a Warrant to the Constable of *Cirencester*, who saw me going to a Neighbours House, they run after me, and took me into Costody, and had me to the petty Sessions at *Barnsley*, three miles from *Cirencester*; in the Cold Winter Season, not considering my Age and Weakness, but hurried me up and down at their pleasure, tho they knew me a weakly Woman, and it was Frost and Snow, yet they had no Regard nor Pity, and from the Petty Sessions, they sent a Mittimus to send me to *Glocester* Goal, where I lay three Years and four Months, and *James George* gave the Goaler a charge not to let me go without the Gate, so great was their Fury and Rage against me. Oh! but the Lord was with me, and by his Power did preserve me.

Oh! consider you must all give an account to God, and appear at the great Tribunal Seat of Christ, in the great Day, and receive a Reward for the deeds done in the Body, whether Good or Evil; then how can ye Judges and Justices stand before the Lord in that Day, if you do not repent of your Cruelty (against his People) in joyning Hand in Hand to oppress the Poor. I warn you all that have had a Hand in this Work, from him that sits upon the Seat of Judgment; to your most Inferiour Officers, and all People every where whom this may concern, to repent of what is past, that the Lord may pass it by, for the time that is past cannot be recalled, and the time that is to come you have no assurance of; therefore the present time is your time: Oh! prize the long suffering of the Lord, which to you-ward hath been exceeding large, sparing your Lives, when he hath cut off so many on the Right Hand, and on the Left, and hath given you time to return unto him, before his long suffering comes to an end; and his Fury breaks forth against you, from which none can deliver—— Remember your casting us into Prisons, spoyling Goods, Riffling Houses, taking Money-Boxes, and putting Money in your own Pockets, breakiug Doors, with your own Hands as *Richard Persons*, Chanceller of *Glocester*, did, and endeavoured to do, making use of an Iron-Bar, to break open the Door of *Nathaniel* and *Daniel Roberts*, then of *Cirencester*; because they could not easily do it, called for Gun-powder to blow it open, and when they got in, Seized the Goods, tendered the Oath to the young

young Men, as a ſnare, and they refuſing, were both committed to Priſon, having none left to Mannage their Trade, which to outward things might have Ruined them, had not the good Hand of the Lord appeared for their help, whoſe mercies never fails them that fear him.

And when ſat together to wait upon God, to Worſhip him in the Priſon, *Richard Perſons* came in, and laid violent hands on a Friend, *Henry Perton*, that was ſpeaking, pulling him by the Gray-Hairs of his Head, and held up his Staff at him, and Reviled him, with many Reproachful Words, and ſaid, *it was a Conventicle*, and laid fines upon us, Twenty Pound for the Preacher, and Five, and Ten Shillings apiece upon the reſt, and fined ſome that were not in the Meeting, ſeeing their names in the Goalers Liſt, as the under Keeper ſaid; I would have the Clergy conſider, whether theſe Arguments were like to Convince us; theſe things were not done in a corner, therefore I hope none will be offended for Publiſhing of them, and I ſee no Reaſon why any can blame us, for Non-conformity, ſince ſuch Fruits are brought forth by you, we have been forty, ſome times Sixty Priſoners in the County Priſon, beſides near Twenty more belonging to the City Priſon, Men and their Wives, and ſome Women big with Child, Men and Women together in a cloſe Priſon, where other ſort of Priſoners came amongſt them, and ſuch was their cruelty, both unchriſtian and unhuman, that they would not ſuffer *Ann* the Wife of *Richard Grive*, being near her time, to go to her own Houſe to Ly-in, ſhe promiſed, and ſome offered to Engage ſhe ſhould return to the Priſon again after ſhe was Delivered, as ſoon as ſhe was able, but the Cruelty of Alderman *Shingleton*, and Dr *Fowler* Magiſtrates for the City of *Glouceſter* was ſuch, that they withſtood it; altho ſome ſober Women, that were no *Quakers*, ſought to them on her behalf, and had prevailed with the reſt, if Docter *Fowler* and Alderman *Shingleton* would conſent, but they were ſo far from conſenting, that Alderman *Shingleton*, ſaid, *That if his Mother was alive, & come upon her Knees to him, he would not grant it*, as an Aldermans Wife, that did ſolcite him, told me; but it pleaſed God to find out a way for her, the time of the Aſſizes was near, and Judge *Levens* gave order to the Keeper of the Priſon to let her go Home, ſo ſhe was brought forth over their Heads, who were tryed to the full, & made

manifeſt

manifeſt by their Fruits, and the great God takes notice of the Oppreſſors of his people, and he cut them both off, and ſtopt their Fury; but if they had lived and come to Repentance, it would have been more Joy and Comfort to us; and ye Perſecutors, how can you excuſe your ſelves, who have Impriſoned many of our Friends to Death? ſeveral died Priſoners while I was Priſoner in the Caſtle. An aged Blind-man, *Thomas Holborne*, he was thruſt into Priſon, and not brought before any Magiſtrate, and *Ralph Langley* Priſoner ſeveral Years, till he died alſo, and ſeveral others; this kind of Killing we have had from your Hands, and ſometimes our Friends have been Beaten and Bruiſed, by knocking and throwing hither and thither till they Died, this I have ſeen; and notwithſtanding ſo many Died, that was ſtronger then I, yet it pleaſed God to preſerve me alive, to ſpeak well of his name, and tell of his wonderous Works, and once more to put you Perſecutors in mind of the things that belong to your Peace; and Bleſſed be the Lord, he is now riſen for his *Sion* ſake, that you have been Ploughing as a Field, and when her Enemies, have done the worſt they can, the Lord will make his *Sion* an Eternal Excellency, and his *Jeruſalem* the Praiſe of the whole Earth: And as you can ſee Perſecution to be evil in others, look upon it ſo in your ſelves, and repent in Duſt and Aſhes, and remember who ſaid, *The Wiſe-Mans Eye is in his Head, but the Fools Eye is abroad to ſee and ſpy faults in others, and blame others for doing that they themſelves are guilty of.* Me-thinks the Eye-lids of the Morning of this day of Liberty, that is dawned and lifted up before you, might bring you to a ſight of your ſtate in this matter, but if this will not prevail upon you, turn in, to the Light of Chriſt Jeſus, in your own Hearts, that is al-ſufficient to ſhew you your inward State, and how theſe evil Works hath brought Death over you; that we may ſay, *Darkneſs hath covered the Earth, and groſs Darkneſs the People*; therefore it is time to riſe from the Dead, that Chriſt may give you Life, and receive his Light, that will lead you into the way of Peace.

Its well known that we have been a ſuffering People all along, ever ſince we were gathered by the Lord out of the Evils of the World, and have ſuffered under every Power that hath been uppermoſt, for above Thirty Years to my knowledge, ſome in one kind,

kind, and many under that cruel Oppreſſion of *Tythes*, by the Prieſts, which is ſtill continued upon us, under which many of the Inhabitants of this Land groans for deliverance, and the Lord God is able to remove it; but knows beſt in what ſeaſon further to appear in his Power to effect it; but the Lord may ſuffer it to continue for the farther manifeſting ſuch hireling Prieſts, whoſe Practices towards us have manifeſted ſome of them to be as bad as the wicked Informers, by their Spoyling, Riffling Houſes, and driving Cattle away by droves, as hath been common for them to do, and theſe Practices of theirs diſcovered them to be in the ſteps of the falſe Prophets, and in the ſame Spirit that the wicked Informers were in, that deſire to Live by other Mens Labour, and to enrich themſelves by the Spoyl of their Neighbour; this ſhews them to be of the ſtock of them mentioned in Scripture, *that Feed of the Fat, and Cloath with the Wool, and make a Prey of the Flock*; ſo by theſe Fruits People may ſee they are no Miniſters of Chriſt, for he ſaid to his Diſciples when he ſent them forth, *Freely have you received, freely give.* But their Fruits of Covetuouſneſs makes them ill preſidents to their Hearers, and ſuch Work of the Teachers, makes their Hearers, that are of an evil Inclination, to follow their Footſteps, as the Scriptures ſaith, *The Leaders of the People cauſe them to Err, and they that are led by them are deſtroyed.*

The Perſecutor *I. G.* the Prieſt of this Town, he ſet his hand to a Petition with Juſtice *George*, and others of this Town, to ſend to the late King to beg our Meeting-Houſe, under pretence to make a Work-Houſe for the Poor, *Judas* like, who when the Woman with the Box of Spikenard came to anoint *Jeſus*'s Head, ſaid, *What need all this waſte, it might have been ſold and given to the Poor*; but the Scriptures ſaith, *He ſaid it not, becauſe he loved the Poor, but becauſe he was a Thief and carried the Bag.* So ſay I concerning this Prieſt, he did not this becauſe he loved the Poor, but becauſe he had the mind of a Thief, and coveted his Neighbours Houſe, this diſcovers him to be no true Miniſter of the Goſpel, becauſe he falls ſhort of doing the Works for the Law, which ſaith, *Thou ſhalt not covet thy Neighbours Houſe, nor any thing that is his:* and Chriſt commands Men *To do as they would be done by.* So this Work of his is contrary to both Law and Goſpel; but if People are willing to have ſuch Blind Guides, and Sleepy Watchmen, to be their

Teachers

81

Teachers, let them take them and pay them, and not force others to pay them, that know they are Blind, because they cannot see their own Works of what sort they are; for when a Friend went to enquire of him about the Petition aforesaid, he confessed his Hand was to it, and that he thought it would be a kindness to us to take the Meeting-House from us, would he take it as a kindness to be so served? I leave it to Gods Witness in his own and others Consciences to judge; for the same God that hath helpt us, will help us again, if we keep our Integrity to him; He that hath brought us out of the fiery Furnace of Affliction, and was Afflicted with us, will do the same again and again for them that suffer for him; that said to *Saul*, *Why Persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the Pricks.* He it is that pricks the Persecutors in their Consciences, it is He our Enemies have been Persecuting in his People, and he is able to deliver, and will, he that hath an Ear to hear let him hear, and that can receive it let him; for the Breath of all Living are in the hands of our God, then who shall we fear besides him, the God of all our Mercies and Blessings, to whom be Glory forever, *Amen.*

A Few Words to the Inhabitants of the Town of Cirencester *(or else-where) for them to Read and Consider.*

ALl you my Neighbours, Kindred and Acquaintance, both Professors and Prophane, that have had any hand in the late Persecution, or been encouragers of that unchristian Work, directly or indirectly, or those that have laid their Hands on the Prey in taking away and exacting on your honest Neighbour more then the value of the Fines specified in your Warrants, thô some of you have been ready to say, to excuse your selves, *That it was much against your minds to meddle with it, but that you were put upon it, being Officers, and could not help it.* To which I Answer, Your diligence and readiness to lay your Hands on, and taking much

more then the value of the Fines, contradicts all your pretences, and brings the guilt upon you of contributing to our Sufferings; but this day of Tryal, that the Lord suffered to come, was not only to try his People, but to try others also, when the Reins were let loose, and a Door opened to Violence and Oppression, and many that were of an evil Inclination were ready to make a Spoyl and a Prey; so this day hath made you manifest, for all your fair pretences, thô some are ready to say, to cover themselves, *What they did then was according to Law*; but this covering will prove too narrow to hide you from the Al-seeing Eye of the Mighty God, and from the stroke of his Hand in the day of Account, when the Lord comes to reckon with you, then how will you stand before him, or excuse your selves of the guilt of adding to our Sufferings? your readiness to cut out, to sell and dispose of it, when it was in your Hands, signifies that you were willing to encourage the Work, and the hard-heartedness too; as appears in the Case of *John Stevens*, in taking so much from him more then the value of the Fine, to seek the Ruin of him and his Family, the Lord will plead his Cause with you, and bring shame upon you for acting so contrary to Law, in dividing the Spoyl, and putting it into your own Pockets; Repent and make Restitution, that lest it lie as a weight upon you in the day of account; therefore never plead Law to excuse your selves, for it will lie at your Doors, and manifest you to be of the same Spirit of them of old that Crucified *Christ Jesus*, and to excuse themselves said, *We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to Dye.* So they pleaded Law, as you do now; but that will not excuse you no more then it did them, for the Law of God is against you, that saith, *Thou shalt Love thy Neighbour as thy self, and thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy Neighbours*; but how unreasonable you have been with your Neighbours, in taking much more then the value, let Gods Witness in your own Consciences answer; and you that have bought it out of Covetousness, because you could have it at a cheap rate, or taking it away, and have furnished your houses with it, you will be found Guilty before the Lord; therefore Repent, for if the Lord was angry with *Esau*, because he stood, and looked on when *Jacob* was Spoyled, and laid his Hand upon the prey, so that he threatened to lay his Mountaine waste, how think you to escape, that are found

found in the same Practice, ont only looking on, but making a Spoyl and Prey upon your honest Neighbors; and remember how *Israel* could not prosper, while the accursed thing remained in the Camp, the *Babylonish Garment* and *Wedg of Gold* which Covetousness had brought in; but when search was made, it was found amongst the Stuff; but till they had put it out of the Camp, it hindred *Israels* Prosperity: Consider this well I Intreat you, and take heed in time, and put away the accursed thing from among your Stuff, you that have Bought it, and brought it into your Houses; and let a diligent search be made to find it out, and restore it to the Owners, lest it bring a Curse upon you. I Write not these things in Revenge to any, but in the Love of God to warn you all to Repent and amend, that you may find Mercy with the Lord, which is the true desire of my soul; I can truly say, and that in the presence of the Lord, that I have nothing in my Heart but Love and Good-will to the worst of our Enemies, and that in Sincerity of Heart, and Uprightness of Mind, I truly desire your everlasting Peace and Welfare, that have hitherto hardened your Hearts against the Lord, his Truth and People; Return to the Lord, I Intreat you, bow your selves before the most High God, who will plead with all Flesh, and call all to an account, and render a Reward to every Man for the deeds done in the Body whether Good or Evil; therefore consider well while you have time, and mind the things that belongs to your Peace, before they be hid from your Eyes, for the long Suffering of the Lord will come to an end, who hath said *My Spirit shall not always strive with Man*; therefore whilst the Spirit of the Lord, his Light and Grace in your own Hearts doth strive to turn you from the evil of your wayes, be willing to imbrace it, believe in it, and take counsel of it, and with your whole Hearts be Subject unto it, and be willing to be led and guided by it, and incline your Hearts in all things to follow it, and it will lead you into Rest and Peace with the Lord for ever.

These things were as a weight upon my mind to publish for the Sakes of those, that are willing to hearken to Counsel, and take Warning in time, and not reject their own Mercies, for as the Lord said to the Prophet *Ezekiel*, *Hear the word at my Mouth, and give them warning from me, when I say unto the Wicked thou shalt surely*

ſurely Dye, and thou giveſt him not warning, nor ſpeakeſt to warn the Wicked from his Wicked way, to ſave his Life, the ſame Wicked Man ſhall Dye in his Iniquity, but his Blood will I require at thine Hand, yet if thou warn the Wicked and he turn not from his Wickedneſs nor from his Wicked way, he ſhall Dye in his Iniquity; but thou haſt delivered thy own Soul, ſo I can ſay in the fear of God, I have once more cleared my Conſcience; whether you will hear or forbear I ſhall be clear of your Blood in the great Day of Acconnt, before the Lord, who laid theſe things as a weight upon me to put you in mind of, and bleſſed will all be that do hear and fear before the Lord, and receive his Counſel, to whom be all Glory, Honour and Renown, who is worthy over all, God bleſſed for ever and ever, *Amen. But thoſe that Refuſe and Rebel, ſhall be devoured with the Sword, the Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it*, as ſaith the Prophet *Iſaiah*.

From a lover of Truth and Righteouſneſs, having a Teſtimony againſt Cruelty and Oppreſſion.

29th 11th Month 1687

Theophila Townſend.

THE END